



# LIVING ALONE

Catalogue 11-518E





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## **Introduction**

What does the elderly widow who didn't graduate from high school have in common with today's single male university graduate? They are both members of a growing minority of people who live alone. Living alone has changed from a rare arrangement to the life-style of one in every 11 Canadians. This kit looks at how many such people there are in Canada, where they live, the education, jobs and income they are likely to have and the kind of accommodation they occupy.

**Students will probably be quick to realize why these facts are important to them personally, as they prepare for adult lives-in which there is an increasing probability that they will spend at least some time living alone. They should also be interested in the use that can be made of these statistics by housing developers, supermarket chains, advertisers, recreation departments, police, home security firms, and many other agencies.**

**A class bulletin board can be set up for information on people who live alone. Newspapers and magazines abound with articles, advertisements and even comic strips on this group, which doubled in size between 1971 and 1981.**

Statistics Canada conducts a census of the national population every 10 years. The data presented here are based on the findings of the census taken on June 3, 1981. The census definition of "single" to mean "never married" is used throughout.

## How many Canadians live alone?

### Chart 1

In 1981, the census showed that one of every 11 Canadians lived alone. The one-person household was second only to the two-person household in frequency. As we see here, in 1956 only 7.9% of all Canadian households consisted of one person. By 1981 this had risen to 20.3%.

### Table 1

The number of persons living alone rose steadily from 309,000 in 1956 to 1,681,000 in 1981. The most dramatic increase occurred between 1971 and 1981, when the numbers of such people more than doubled. As a result, although they had made up only 2.8% of the population over 15 in 1956, they made up 8.9% in 1981.

**Students will be able to suggest reasons for these increases, such as:**

- The “baby boom” generation members reached their twenties in the 1970s, and many remained single.
- The life expectancy of women is now several years longer than that of men so we can expect there to be more widows. (Life expectancy tables give 77.5 years for women and 70.2 for men.)
- The Divorce Act of 1968 led to an increase in the number of divorces. Between 1971 and 1981, the number of divorced persons almost tripled.
- The 1981 Census showed that the “real” income of Canadians went up on average by 28% over 1971. For unattached people it rose even more. As a result, more people could afford to set up separate households, and many of them did so.



## Who lives alone?

### Chart 2

Here we see the percentages in various age groups of men and women who live alone. The chart suggests that you are most likely to live alone at two stages in life — between the ages of 20 and 34, and after 65. If you are male, there is slightly more chance that you will live alone at the younger age. If you live alone after the age of 65, however, you are considerably more likely to be a woman — elderly women outnumber elderly men living alone by three to one.

**A class discussion will lead to some explanations for these findings. Most statistics suggest that younger men will, on average, earn more than younger women, and are therefore more able to afford to live alone. Perhaps, too, society still considers young men freer to move away from the parental home at an early age. In the case of young divorced people, the men are less likely to have custody of children. As for the elderly group, women, on average, live longer than men and are less likely to remarry after the death of a spouse.**

### Chart 3

Most people who live alone have either never been married or are widowed. The picture for men, however, is different from that for women. While more than half the men who live alone are single (57%), almost half (47%) of women who live alone are widowed. Of men who live alone, 28% are separated or divorced, but this is true for only 16% of women who live alone. This can be largely explained by the fact that after a marriage breakdown women usually have custody of any children.

## Chart 4

This chart gives information about the education of people between the ages of 25 and 44 who have never been married. Members of this group who live alone are more likely to have a university degree than members who live with others. As can be seen, in keeping with the trend identified in "Schooling in Canada" (Catalogue 99-938), for both sexes there is a greater percentage of degrees in the younger age group. In the two age groups shown, however, single women living alone are more likely to hold degrees than single men living alone.

**Students can suggest reasons for these facts. One might be economic. Are women with degrees more likely than other single women to earn enough to set up their own households?**

## Table 3

Interestingly, men over the age of 34 are rather less likely to be in the labour force if they live alone than if they live with others. Women who live alone, on the other hand, have much higher participation in the labour force than those who live with others, at every age except over 65.

## Table 5

As you might guess, men and women aged 15-64 who live alone, whether single, separated or divorced, earn more than men and women of the same marital status who live with others.

For elderly widows, in 1980, those who lived alone averaged \$8,200 in personal income, which does not allow for many extras.



## Where do they live?

### Chart 6

The chart shows how the 1,681,100 Canadians who live alone are distributed among the various parts of the country. Prince Edward Island has the smallest number of people who live alone, 6,200 or 0.4%, Ontario has the largest, 611,300 or 36.4%. Compared with the distribution of the general population, however, those who live alone are somewhat over-represented in British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and under-represented in the Atlantic provinces.

**What percentage of all the people living alone live in your province? How does this compare with the percentage of the national population living there?**

### Chart 7

Here we see what percentage of every province's population lived alone in 1971 and in 1981. The percentage has risen noticeably in every part of the country. In 1981 British Columbia was the province with the highest percentage of its population living alone, more than 10 in every 100. Living alone is least common in Newfoundland, where the proportion is only three out of every 100.

The lower dotted line shows the national average for 1971; the upper dotted line shows the national average for 1981. As you see, east of the Ontario-Quebec border, the proportion living alone in each province is less than the national average. West of this border only Alberta and the Territories are below it. In these 10 years, Alberta changed from having a higher percentage of people

living alone than the national average to having a lower percentage. This may be because many young families moved to Alberta from other provinces during those years.

## **Table 6**

A single detached house is the type of dwelling chosen most often by people in Canada. This is true for only 30% of people who live alone, however, as compared with 67% of people who live with others. As many as 45% of those who live alone occupy multiple dwellings such as duplexes, garden homes and condominiums and 22% occupy apartments in high-rise buildings. The 1981 Census also tells us that people who live alone are twice as likely to rent accommodation as they are to buy it. Home ownership is highest among widowers and widows.

**Students can probably suggest who might be interested in this information and how they might use it. Some examples might be building developers, home security firms, recreation planners, etc.**

**The class can discuss how likely it is that the trend for people to live alone will continue. They could take into account:**

- the “baby boom” population;
- life expectancy trends;
- proposed new divorce legislation;
- state of the national economy and the construction industry.

**Some might like to discuss the extended family as it exists in other cultures and the significance for society as a whole of the fact that more and more people are choosing to live apart from family and friends.**



## Living Alone

### Exercises

**Table 1**

1. Use the information on this table to construct a graph to show how the percentage of the population living alone has increased since 1956.
2. What percentage of the population over 15 lived alone in 1956? in 1981?
3. Which decade has shown the greatest increase in the percentage of the population living alone?
4. Can you give three reasons for the trend?

**Table 1 Living Alone**

**Persons Living Alone as a Percentage of the Population 15 Years and Over and as a Percentage of All Households, Canada, 1956-1981**

	1956	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981
Persons living alone ('000)	309	425	590	812	1,205	1,681
Persons living alone as a percentage of the population 15 years and over	2.8	3.5	4.4	5.3	7.0	8.9
One-person households* as a percentage of all households	7.9	9.3	11.4	13.4	16.8	20.3

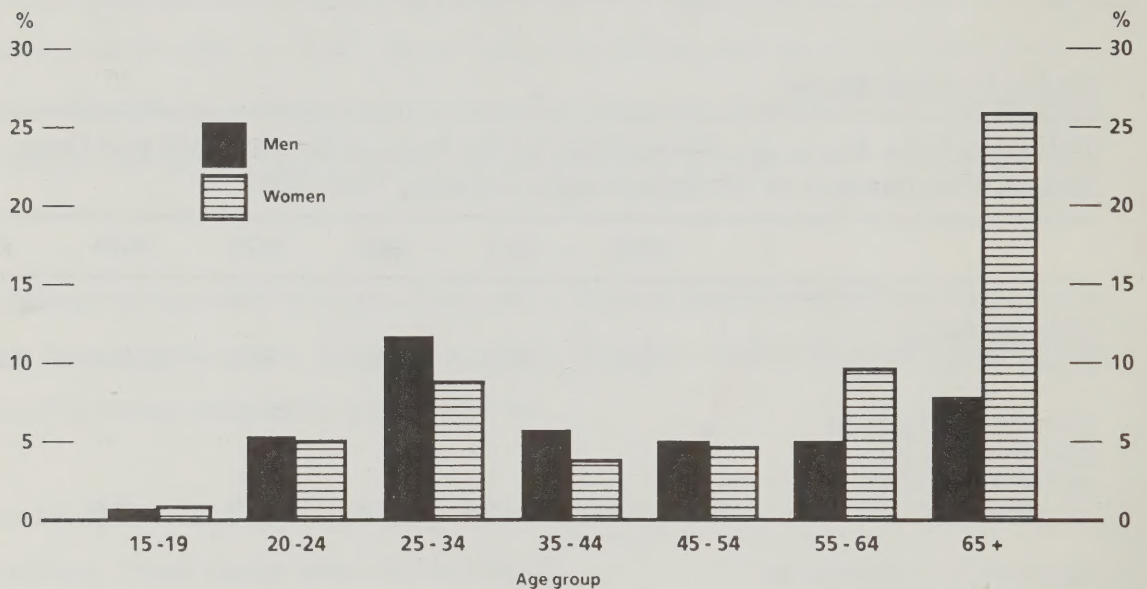
\* The number of one-person households is equivalent to the number of persons living alone.  
 Source: Various Census of Canada bulletins, 1956-1981.

## Chart 2

5. At which two times in your life do these figures suggest you are most likely to live alone?
6. At what age are you most likely to live alone if you are a man? Can you explain this answer?
7. At what age are you most likely to live alone if you are a woman? Can you explain this answer?

*Chart 2 Living Alone*

Percentage Distribution by Age and Sex of Persons Living Alone, Canada, 1981



Note: Excludes population aged less than 15.

Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

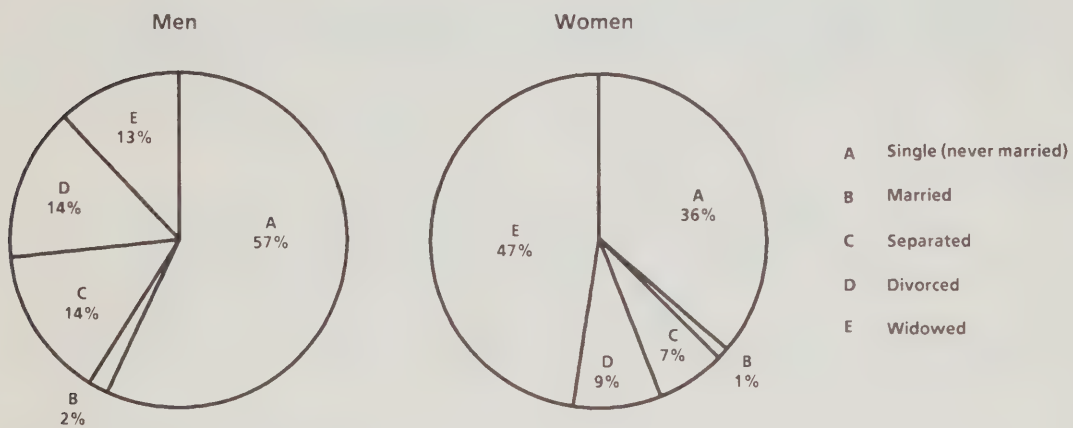


### Chart 3

8. Compare the facts given on the marital status of men who live alone and women who live alone. Can you suggest why there would be a sex difference in these statistics?

#### Chart 3 Living Alone

Percentage Distribution by Marital Status of Men and Women Living Alone, Canada, 1981



Note: Excludes population aged less than 15.

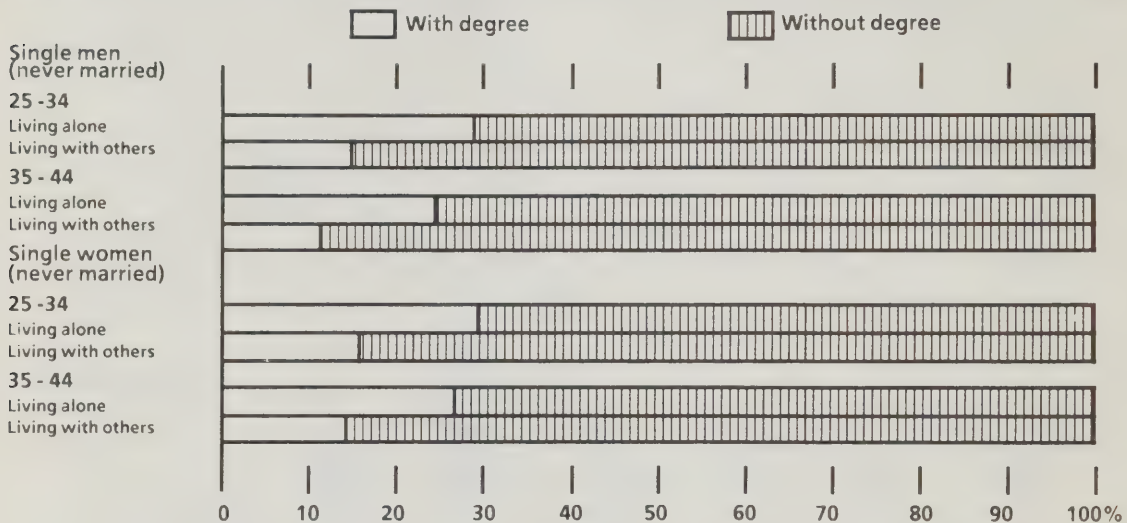
Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

## Chart 4

9. People in which age group are more likely to have a university degree: 25-34 or 35-44?
10. From this chart make a general statement comparing the education of people who live alone and that of people who live with others.
11. Compare the proportions of men and women who live alone and have university degrees.

### Chart 4 Living Alone

Percentage of Degree-holders Among Single (Never Married) Persons Living Alone and Persons Living With Others, by Sex and Selected Age Groups, Canada, 1981



Source: 1981 Census of Canada.



**Table 5**

12. Compare the average employment incomes of people who live alone and people who live with others.
13. Compare the average employment incomes of single, separated and divorced men and women who live alone.
14. Can you suggest why the discrepancy should exist?

**Table 5 Living Alone**

**Average 1980 Employment Income of Full-time, Full-year Workers Aged 15 to 64 by Selected Marital Status and Sex, Persons Living Alone and Persons Living with Others, Canada, 1981**

	Single (never married)		Separated		Divorced	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Living alone	18,900	16,000	22,700	14,800	22,700	15,800
Living with others	14,200	12,300	20,600	13,600	20,700	14,800

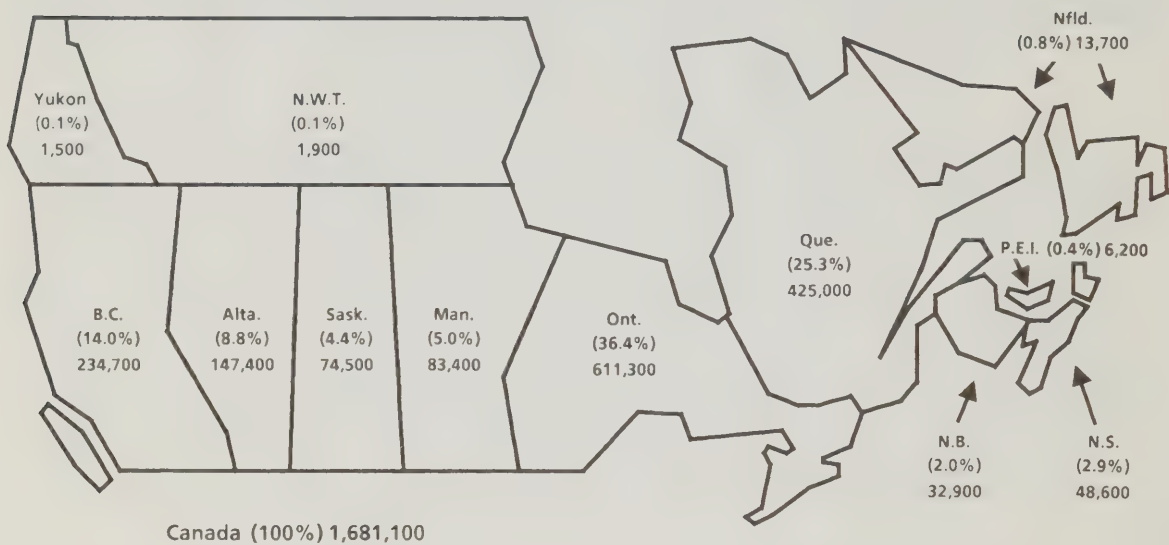
Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

## Chart 6

15. Which province has the smallest number of people who live alone?
16. Which province has the largest number of people who live alone?
17. How many people are there in your own province or territory who live alone? What percentage is this of the national population living alone?

### Chart 6 Living Alone

Number and Percentage Distribution by Province and Territory  
of Persons Living Alone, Canada, 1981



Note: Excludes population aged less than 15.

Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

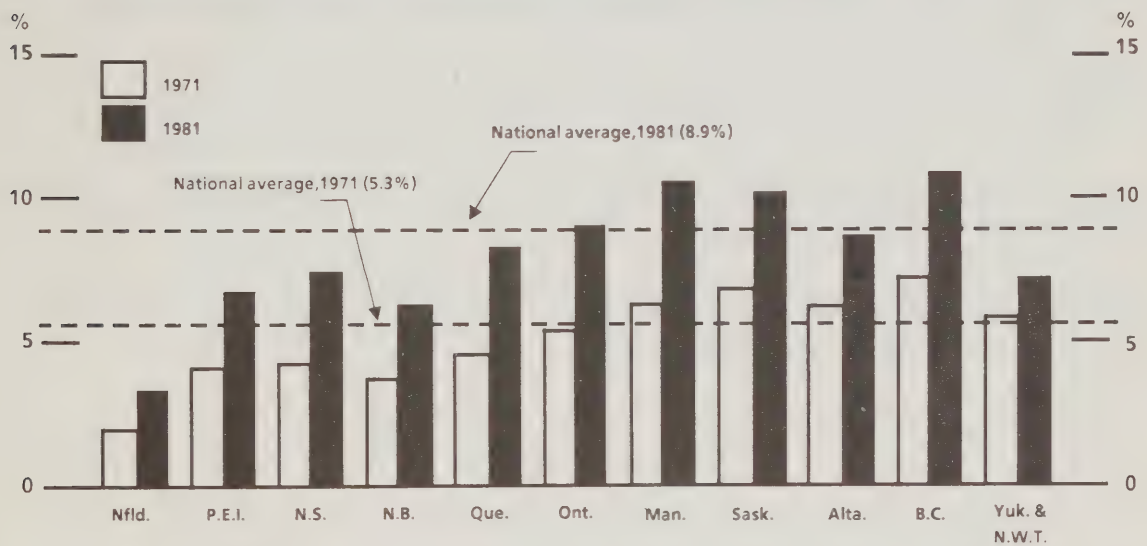


**Chart 7**

18. Which part of Canada has the lowest percentage of its population living alone?
19. Which part of Canada has the highest percentage of its population living alone?
20. How did your own province or territory compare with the national average for population living alone in 1971? 1981?
21. What reasons can you suggest for your answers to the above questions?

**Chart 7 Living Alone**

Persons Living Alone as a Percentage of the Population 15 Years and Over,  
Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1971 and 1981



Source: 1971 Census of Canada bulletins.  
1981 Census of Canada.

## General Questions

1. Write an essay comparing the statistics for men who live alone and women who live alone. You should discuss age, income, marital status, education and labour force participation. Where possible, give reasons for the differences between the sexes.
2. Suppose you are planning a housing development to accommodate people who live alone. What special features might be introduced into the accommodation? Make a presentation to the class on your plans, especially as they have been influenced by these statistics.
3. Write an essay on how the facts about those who live alone might change during the next few years. Consider such things as the changing population, easier divorce laws, increased participation of women in the labour force, more men gaining custody of their children, more (or less) availability of housing, etc.
4. Show how the following people could make use of the statistics shown here: a grocery store manager, a restaurant owner, the proprietor of a home security firm, an advertiser. (Students could pick one and make a presentation on this to the class.)
5. Hold a debate on the pros and cons of living alone at different stages of life.



## Living Alone

### Game Questions

1. In 1981, the percentage of the population over 15 who lived alone was: **9%; 15%; 20%?**
2. Women who live alone are most likely to be: **single; divorced; widowed?**
3. Men who live alone are most likely to be: **single; divorced; widowed?**
4. What percentage of the population living alone hold university degrees: **4%; 12%; 20%?**
5. Which part of Canada has the smallest percentage of adults who live alone: **Saskatchewan; Newfoundland; the Territories?**
6. Of the following types of accommodation which is chosen least often by people who live alone: **single houses; high-rise apartments; other multiple dwellings?**
7. At what age are men who live alone much more likely to participate in the labour force than men who live with others: **15-19; 35-44; 65 and over?**
8. Which of the following groups, living alone, is likely to have the highest employment income: **single women; separated women; divorced women?**
9. The highest rates of home ownership among those who live alone are for: **widowed people; divorced people; single people?**
10. In 1980 the average annual income of widows who lived alone was: **\$17,000; \$8,200; \$12,300?**

## **Living Alone**

### **Game Question Answers**

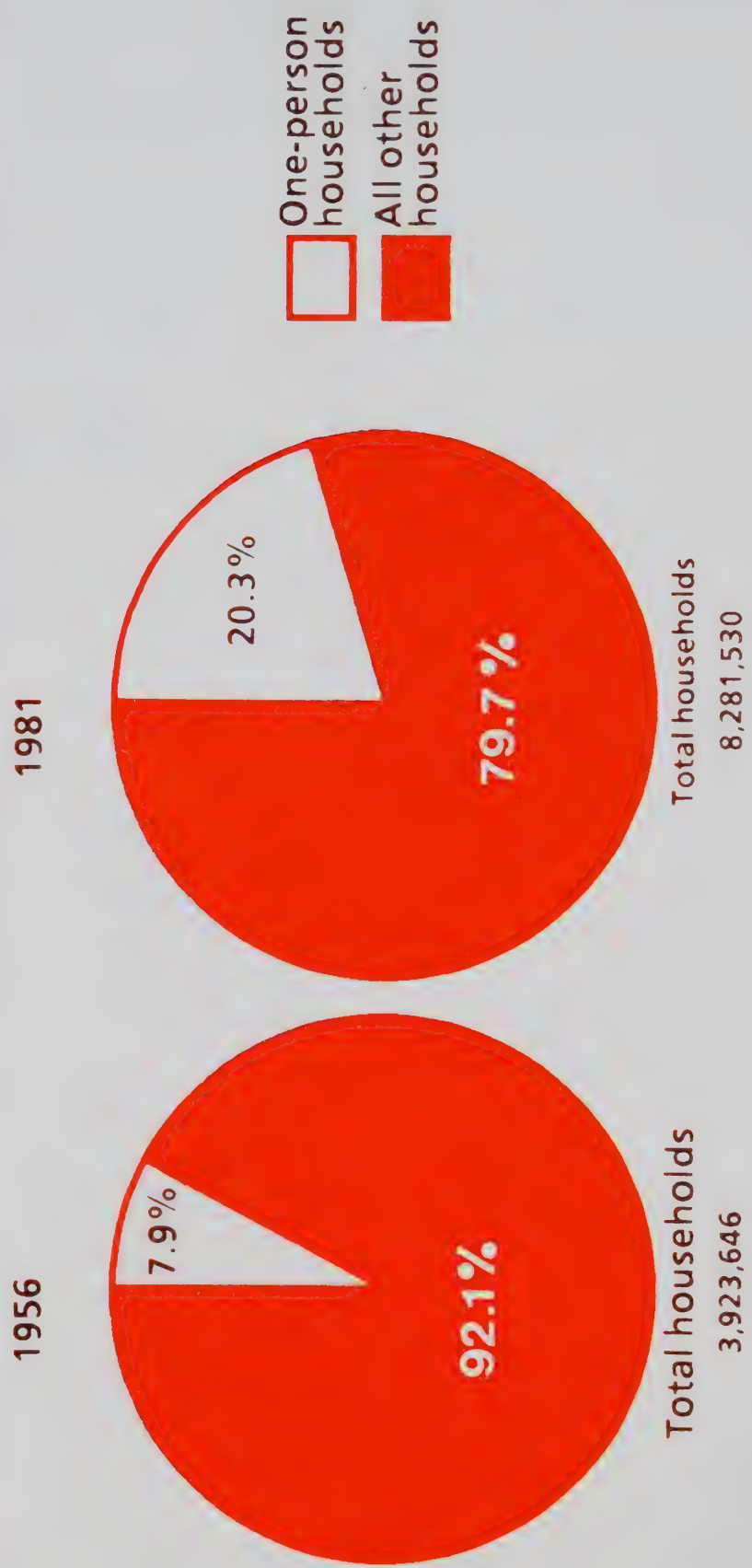
- 1. 9%**
- 2. Widowed**
- 3. Single**
- 4. 12%**
- 5. Newfoundland (3%)**
- 6. High-rise apartments (chosen by 22.3%)**
- 7. 15-19**
- 8. Single women who live alone (\$16,000)**
- 9. Widowed people**
- 10. \$8,200**





Chart 1 Living Alone

One-person Households as a Percentage of All Households, Canada, 1956 and 1981



Source: Various Census of Canada bulletins (1956-1981)

**Chart 3 Living Alone**

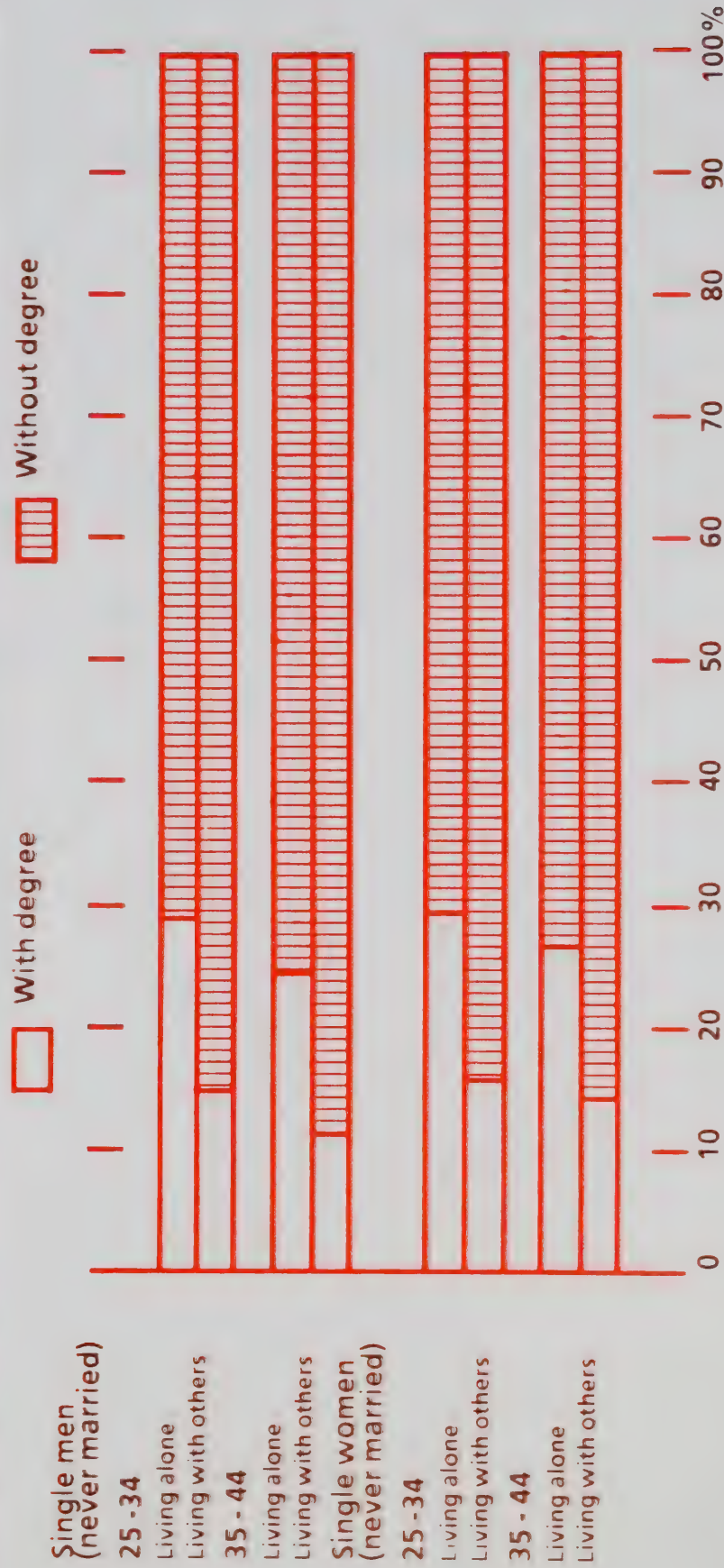
**Percentage Distribution by Marital Status of Men and Women Living Alone, Canada, 1981**



Note: Excludes population aged less than 15  
Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

# Chart 4 Living Alone

Percentage of Degree-holders Among Single (Never Married) Persons Living Alone and Persons Living With Others, by Sex and Selected Age Groups, Canada, 1981

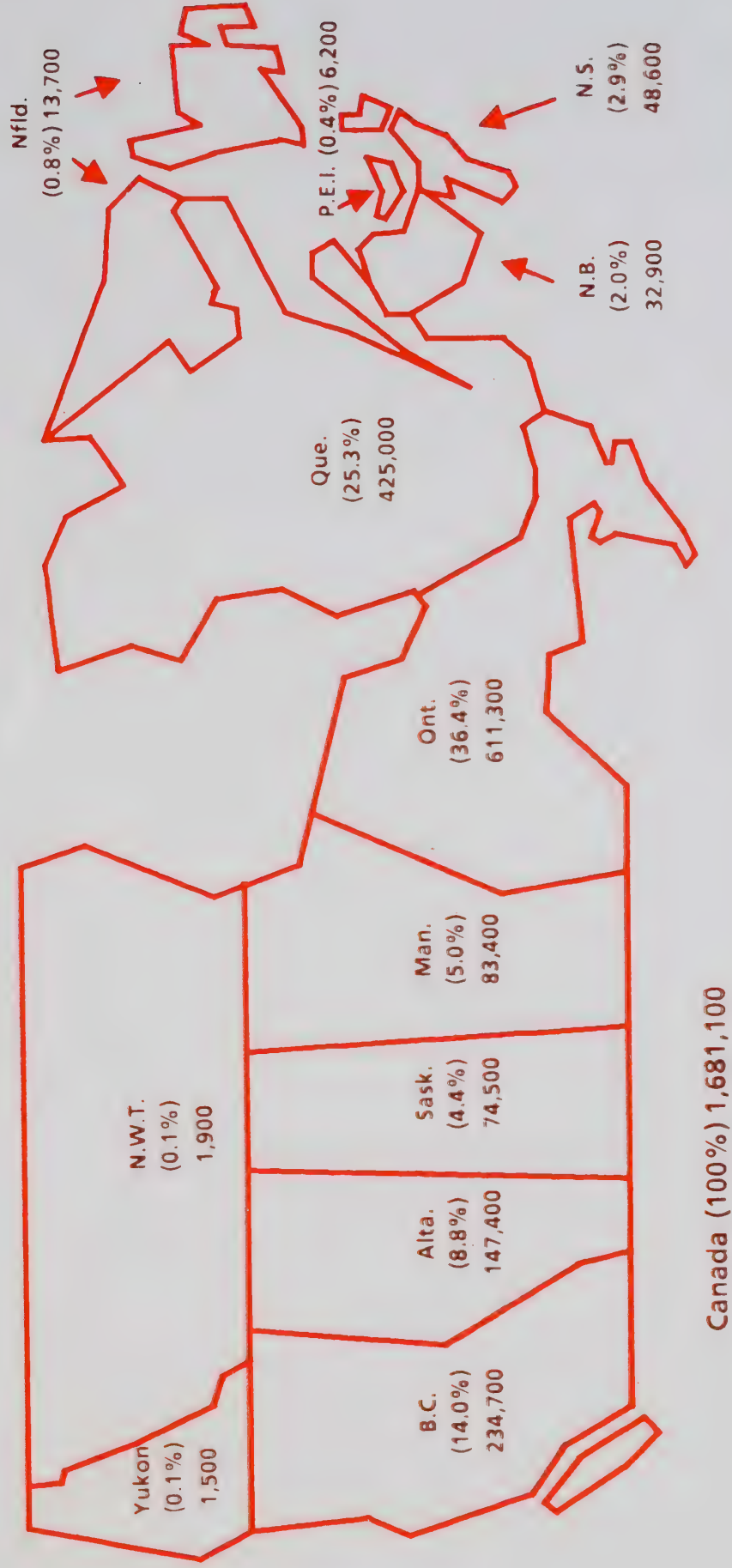


Source: 1981 Census of Canada.



## Chart 6 Living Alone

Number and Percentage Distribution by Province and Territory of Persons Living Alone, Canada, 1981

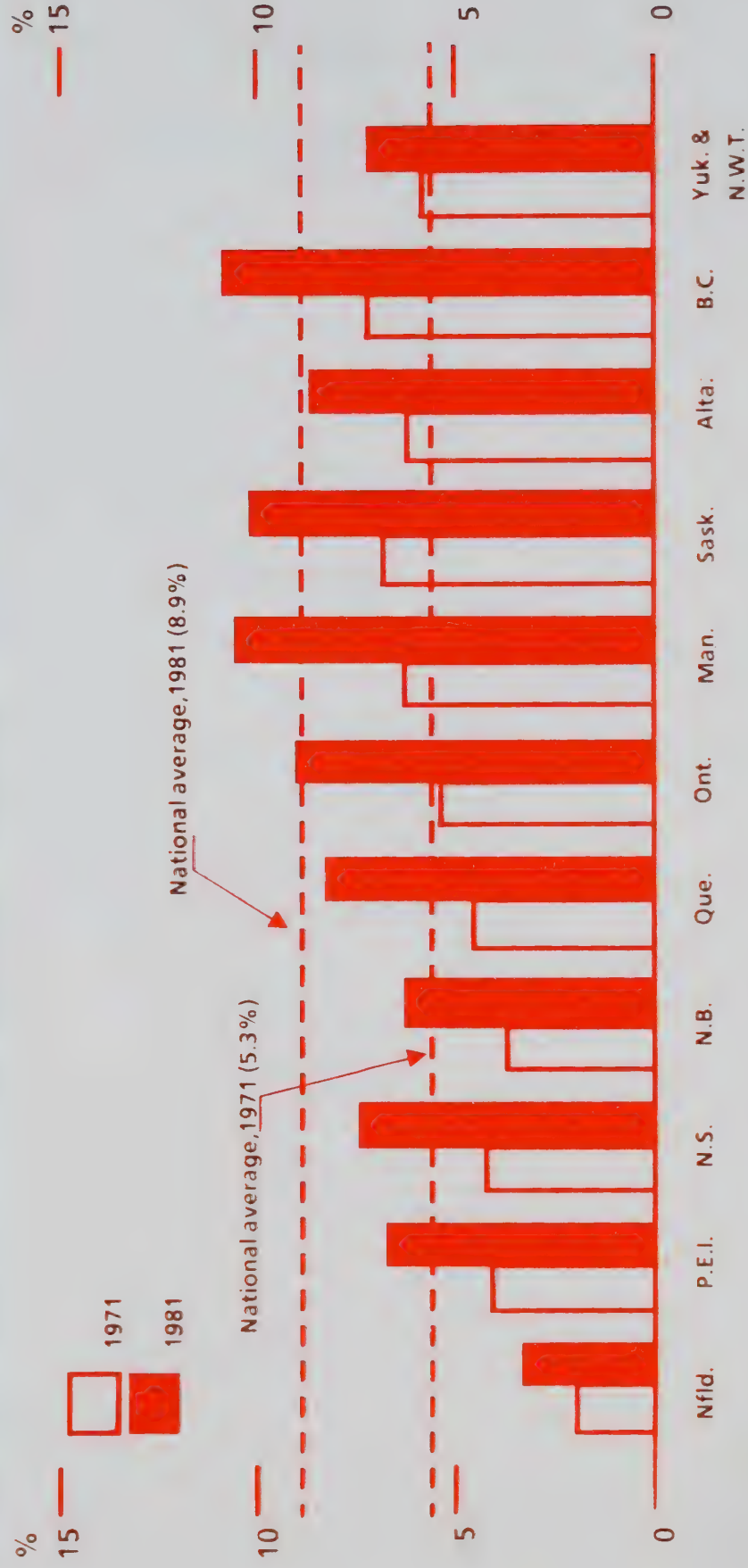


Note: Excludes population aged less than 15.

Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

**Chart 7 Living Alone**

**Persons Living Alone as a Percentage of the Population 15 Years and Over, Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1971 and 1981**



Source: 1971 Census of Canada bulletins  
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\* The number of one-person households is equivalent to the number of persons living alone.  
Source: Various Census of Canada bulletins, 1956-1981.



**Table 3 Living Alone**

**Labour Force Participation Rates by Age and Sex, Persons Living Alone and Persons Living with Others, Canada, 1981**

	Age group						
	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+ Total
%							
<b>Men</b>							
Living alone	88.4	94.7	95.3	92.8	85.2	65.9	13.5 74.6
Living with others	48.3	90.5	95.3	95.4	92.8	78.5	17.9 78.5
<b>Women</b>							
Living alone	88.0	94.6	95.2	89.6	76.4	48.8	5.2 46.0
Living with others	43.9	75.8	63.5	63.1	54.5	33.4	6.5 52.5
<b>Total</b>							
Living alone	88.2	94.6	95.3	91.5	80.9	54.6	7.1 57.7
Living with others	46.2	83.2	79.1	79.2	73.7	55.7	12.3 65.5

Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

**Table 5 Living Alone**

**Average 1980 Employment Income of Full-time, Full-year Workers Aged 15 to 64 by Selected Marital Status and Sex, Persons Living Alone and Persons Living with Others, Canada, 1981**

	Single (never married)		Separated		Divorced	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
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